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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 012939

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/21/2014
TAGS: [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [CO](#) [OAS](#) [AUC](#)
SUBJECT: AUC'S CALIMA BLOC DEMOBILIZES

REF: A. BOGOTA 12736
[1B.](#) BOGOTA 12188

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

Summary

[11.](#) (C) The Calima Bloc, the fifth paramilitary group to demobilize in 2004, demobilized near a small village in northern Valle del Cauca Department on December 18. Bloc members, most from the departments of Valle del Cauca or Antioquia, turned in over 500 weapons. The police have increased their presence in the Cauca River valley, where the Calima Bloc used to operate, and the military is conducting counterguerrilla operations in the mountain range east of the valley, where the FARC is active. Civilian and security officials noted that drug trafficking by other illegal armed groups and the Norte del Valle Cartel remained a serious obstacle to fully securing the region. Peace Commissioner Restrepo said the Calima Bloc would be the last paramilitary group to demobilize in 2004, bringing the total number of paramilitaries demobilized collectively in 2004 to approximately 2,600. End Summary.

Calima Bloc Demobilizes

[12.](#) (U) On December 18, 553 paramilitaries from the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia's (AUC) Calima Bloc demobilized on a farm near the village of Galicia, Bugalagrande municipality, Valle del Cauca Department. Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo, AUC commanders, and local government and Roman Catholic Church officials, including Valle del Cauca Governor Angelino Garzon and the Bishop of Buga, gave speeches. Police and military officers, other GOC officials, and members of the OAS verification mission were also present. Chief of National Police Operations General Alberto Ruiz was the highest-ranking security official in attendance. Governor Garzon urged other illegal armed groups active in the department to follow the Calima Bloc's example and cease hostilities. He encouraged the GOC and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) to hold a humanitarian exchange. AUC senior commander Salvatore Mancuso, who appeared in civilian clothes after having officially demobilized in Catatumbo on December 10 (ref a), lamented that some doubted his motives for participating in the peace process and emphasized that his only objective was demobilization and peace. Central Bolivar Bloc (BCB) political commander Ivan Roberto Duque, aka "Ernesto Baez," said other paramilitary groups active on the Pacific coast, including the Pacific Bloc, were prepared to demobilize in [12005](#). Both Duque and Restrepo praised AUC leader Vicente Castano's support for the peace process.

[13.](#) (U) In contrast to the other two large-scale paramilitary demobilizations of 2004 (reftels), which took place near large towns, the Calima Bloc demobilized in an isolated rural area. The nearest airstrip was at least a 45-minute drive away on poorly maintained dirt roads. AUC commanders Mancuso and Duque arrived in a private helicopter from the concentration zone at Santa Fe de Ralito, Cordoba Department, under the supervision of the Peace Commissioner's staff.

Looking Forward to a New Life

[14.](#) (U) Many of the demobilizing paramilitaries cheered when they turned in their weapons; some even kicked their ammunition. Galicia residents attended the event, and one observer commented that some in the crowd had traveled long distances in hopes of being reunited with sons or daughters whom they suspected had joined the Calima Bloc. There were ten women and 26 minors in the bloc. Bloc members surrendered just under 500 weapons, primarily rifles but also about ten machine guns and a dozen rocket launchers. OAS mission staff immediately began taking inventory of the weapons.

[15.](#) (C) The demobilized paramilitaries began leaving the zone on December 19 in government-provided buses. Few were natives of the Bugalagrande area. Over 300 were from Valle del Cauca Department, mostly from the cities of Buenaventura

and Cali. Another 170 were from Antioquia Department, who will report to the reinsertion center in Turbo, in Antioquia's coastal Uraba region. The GOC has not yet decided where to establish the reinsertion center for former paramilitaries from Valle del Cauca. Several members of Restrepo's staff said a preliminary check of the list of demobilizing paramilitaries conducted by the Prosecutor General's Office ("Fiscalia") and Department of Administrative Security (DAS) indicated about ten percent are implicated in crimes beyond membership in an illegal armed group and would be required to report to the concentration zone at Santa Fe de Ralito. Twenty former members of the Bananero Bloc and 60 former members of the Catatumbo Bloc are already there.

Good Security, But Drug Trafficking Remains A Problem

16. (C) Local police and government officials expressed confidence in the state's ability to prevent areas formerly dominated by the Calima Bloc from being taken over by the FARC or other illegal armed groups. They emphasized, however, that drug trafficking remains a serious threat to the area's security. The police have increased their presence in the Cauca River valley, where the Calima Bloc used to operate, and the military is conducting counterguerrilla operations in the mountains east of the river, where guerrillas led by FARC commander Fabian Ramirez are active. The Calima Bloc had partially blocked the FARC from entering the valley to transport drugs to the Pacific coast or along the river. GOC officials underscored the importance of demobilizing the Pacific Bloc and combating the Norte de Valle Cartel, both of which are active in the mountains to the west of the Cauca River and along the coast.

Demobilizations Will Continue in 2005

17. (C) Restrepo told Embassy officials the Calima Bloc will be the last paramilitary group to demobilize in 2004, bringing the total number of paramilitaries demobilized in collective acts this year to 2,624. The next paramilitary groups to demobilize will be 800 paramilitaries in Cordoba Department formerly under Mancuso's command and 110 in the Mojana region of Cordoba, Bolivar, and Antioquia Departments, who are only loosely affiliated with the AUC. Restrepo thanked the Embassy for its political support for demobilization, but expressed frustration over the conditions the international community was placing on the process. He lamented that international focus has been on the legal debate regarding justice and reparations, and not on the fact that the GOC has achieved the successful demobilization of thousands of rank and file paramilitary troops.

WOOD